

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2009

A Journey of Kindness Starting in Perth (Scotland)



(Click image to visit photo gallery.)

It's not every day you come across a [Neolithic Pictish orb](#), or at least a replica of a Neolithic Pictish orb. And yet in New Glasgow we were introduced to a man whose fascination with orbs of an undetermined purpose, set in train a fabulous chain of events.

While researching the roman invasion of Scotland, Zambian-born, but Scottish blooded, sculptor, Warren MacLeod, discovered a series of photographs of carved stone orbs, apparently dating back to the Neolithic period. Nearly 400 of these orbs have been found in Scotland and yet their origins and purpose are apparently still a mystery. When a farmer showed him a bronze cast of one he had dug up in his field, Warren was hooked.

Nearly ten years later, Warren had his own orb. This one, however, he had carved from grey African wonderstone. Warren's orb has six faces, each one featuring a unique Celtic-style design. While the stone was beautiful as a simple carving, Warren decided that it had a higher purpose. He presented the [Sconestone](#), as it is now known, to his wife, [Kari](#), for Valentine's Day, and then explained to her that she couldn't keep it, in fact she would have to give it away and might possibly never see it again. Rather than simply give the stone to Kari, Warren proposed that the stone be handed over to a series of Keepers who would be entrusted with the stone for no more than seven days. Inspired by his wife's many acts of generosity to her family, Warren's plan was that each Keeper would encourage as many people as possible to touch the stone and pledge to carry out an act of kindness. After the seven days, the stone would be passed on to a new Keeper. Keepers and Touchers of the stone would be encouraged to visit the [Sconestone website](#) and record both their experiences and their acts of kindness.

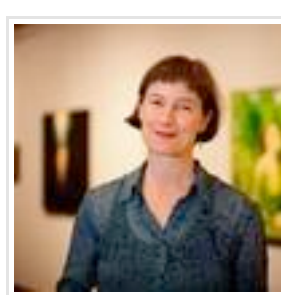
Kari, not surprisingly, agreed.

After travelling from Nova Scotia (New Scotland) Canada, to Perth, Scotland, Kari and Warren were present last night to witness the Sconestone embark on its journey. The "Journey of Kindness" was launched at Scone Palace, by Bruce Guthrie of the Scottish band Runrig. The stone was presented to the first Keeper, Reverend Neil Galbraith, a man who has devoted his life to doing acts of kindness for people around the world – from New York, to Afghanistan to the Sudan, and many countries in between.

Since starting his organization, [Glasgow the Caring City](#), ten years ago, Reverend Galbraith has set out to provide care and compassion wherever a need arises, whether it is sending aid in the wake of the Asian Tsunami or arranging for 50 children who lost fathers in the 9/11 attacks to travel to Scotland for a holiday. For Warren and Kari, Reverend Galbraith was a perfect choice: "There is no one we can think more fitting to take the Sconestone and begin spreading kindness around the world."

We were very proud to have had the opportunity to touch the stone before it left Canada and we will be following its journey with great interest - current indications are that it could cross as many as three continents by the end of September. It's a funny thing that stone; it's amazing how often we think of it when the opportunity arises to do a small act of kindness, whether putting money in someone's expired parking metre or handing over a bandaid to a stranger. And once you start, random acts of kindness are contagious...

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[Satima Flavell](#) said...

What an utterly lovely idea, Fiona! And Perth, Scotland is a lovely place, too.

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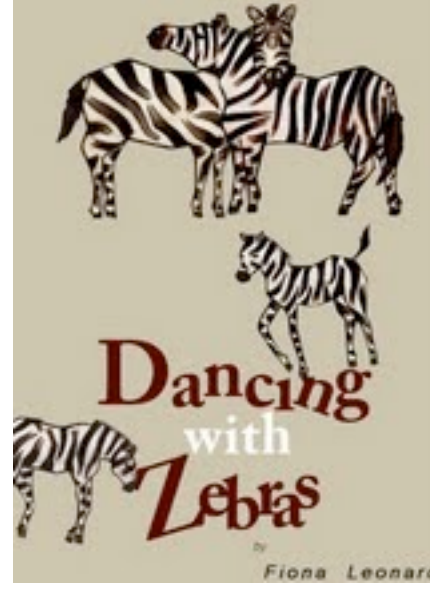


ABOUT

Fiona is a freelance writer whose diplomatic background provides the perfect skill set for writing about the world, and talking her way out of difficult situations. Nyani is a photographer with an eye for the unusual and an accent no-one can place.

Together they explore the world, looking for the unusual, the offbeat, and the inspiring.

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